

Dusing Management Bulletin



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MANAGEMENT DIVISION

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING OFFICIALS

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CONTROLLING UTILITIES CONSUMPTION

Below are descriptions of two different utilities control systems now in operation. They are presented as varying approaches to similar problems. You will note that the New Orleans' plan penalizes tenants for over-consumption on a flat rate basis - that is, if a tenant overuses electricity, whether in an amount of one kilowatt-hour or eighteen kilowatt-hours, his penalty is the same. The Dallas system of check metering has resulted in a more detailed penalty system, permitting varying penalty rates for varying degrees of over-consumption.

FIXED PENALTIES FOR OVER-CONSUMPTION

by William J. Guste

Attorney, Housing Authority of New Orleans

The Authority has a contract with the New Orleans Public Service, Inc., our local utility company, for the furnishing of all gas and electricity at a flat rate. Under the regulations of the City Council, which governs the operation of our local utility company, the company is not permitted to enter into any arrangement on a wholesale basis by which the wholesale consumer would be permitted to resell either gas or electricity. In view of this regulation, it was felt that the Housing Authority could not graduate a penalty on a basis of the excess of gas or electricity consumed by the respective tenant and, as a result, the only practical solution which the Housing Authority felt it might adopt in order to discourage excess consumption was the fixing of a flat penalty. This penalty has therefore been inserted in each of the leases being executed by the Housing Authority.

Perhaps the best way to explain the arrangement is to quote that portion of our lease which relates to utilities. The charges are based on the type of unit involved - whether one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom - and the lease is written as follows to cover this arrangement:

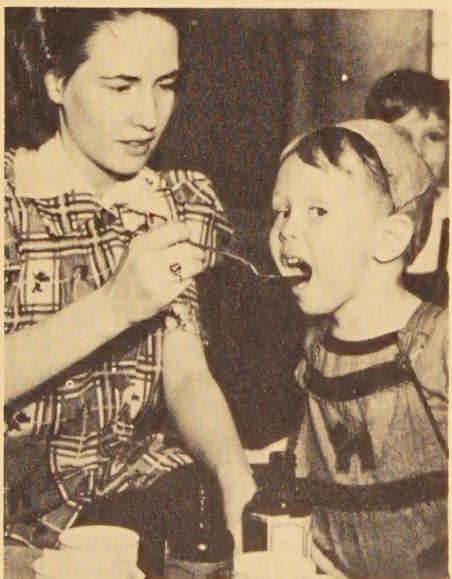
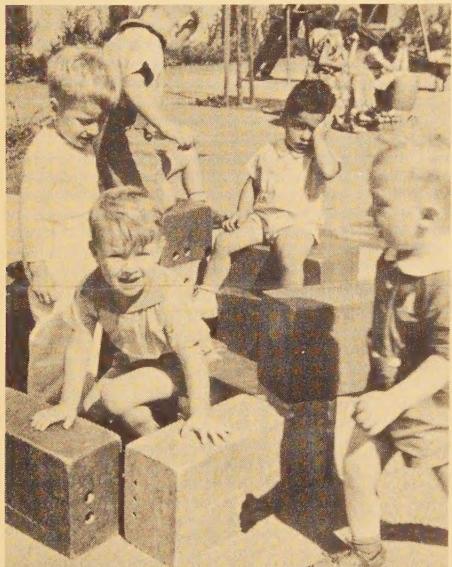
Scale of Fixed Penalties

"The Tenant Agrees: . . . to pay, in the event that the tenant consumes any electrical energy in excess of the amounts agreed to be supplied in each quarter year a penalty of:

one-bedroom unit - \$00.75
two-bedroom unit - 1.25
three-bedroom unit - 1.75

*to pay in the event that the tenant consumes any gas in

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excess of the amount agreed to be supplied in each quarter year a penalty of

one-bedroom unit -	\$00.75
two-bedroom unit -	1.00
three-bedroom unit -	1.75

"The Management agrees: . . . to furnish without additional charge (a) gas not in excess of:

one-bedroom unit -	4274 cubic feet per quarter
two-bedroom unit -	5490 cubic feet per quarter
three-bedroom unit -	6786 cubic feet per quarter

(b) electrical current not in excess of the following number of kilowatt-hours for the quarter indicated:

	1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3-bedroom
January through March	110	137	163
April through June	115	141	181
July through September	118	148	175
October through December	113	138	166 "

We appreciate that the proposed system is entirely new and experimental and that the amounts fixed must be subject to change, depending on our experience. For the present time, however, the fixed scale of penalties as indicated above is to be enforced quarterly.

100 PER CENT CHECK METERING

by James L. Stephenson

Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Dallas

Until February, 1940, Cedar Springs Place had twenty check meters which were rotated, or were supposed to be. Here, as in most cases where such meters are used, I think, a meter ceased to rotate when it registered "over." It was kept on that unit until consumption was reduced with the result that this means of "checking" did not really reveal the situation because too large a proportion of units remained unchecked.

In February, 1940, one hundred per cent check meters were installed and since that time we have kept a series of records to help us draw some general conclusions. We continued from February to July to bill every tenant for every kilowatt-hour in excess of his allowance. During these first four months of one hundred per cent metering we found that 52 per cent of 181 units showed excess consumption and that the per cent of excess increased with the size of the unit. The total excess charges for the period were \$68.67.

In addition to the investment (estimated) of \$1448 in 181 check meters, this total charge of \$68.67 in four months involved twenty-three hours of staff time for reading meters, computing readings, preparing statements of charges, entering charges, receiving and entering collections, and delivering notices and statements.

Scale of Graded Penalties

Less than 5 kilowatt-hours	No charge
6-15 "	\$ 0.25
15-25 "	.50
26-35 "	.75
36-45 "	1.00
46-55 "	1.25
56 and over	.025 per KWH

Although bills are rendered only quarterly, each tenant is given monthly notice of his consumption, which is handed him when he pays rent, so that he may with care keep his three-month consumption below allowance. During the period of this one hundred per cent metering, we have kept records of maximum, minimum, and average consumption in each size unit per month. While there has been excess consumption over the allowance by individuals every month, only four of the ten months recorded show a total consumption by tenants in excess of the total allowance.

On the basis of the total charges of \$68.67 for the period of four months, it was estimated that the charges to tenants would amount to approximately \$210 a year. The actual charges made for the first quarter period after adoption of the quarterly billing scheme amounted to \$91, which would indicate that the year's charges would amount to perhaps \$250.

Does Check Metering Reduce Over-Consumption

It appears doubtful whether one hundred per cent check metering is decreasing tenant consumption any but it does enable us to make proper charge to those who habitually use more than the allowance. It has been our observation that the overages are consistently on the same apartments and no doubt depend upon the particular family.

We give you below the average consumption per unit as determined by one hundred per cent check metering in case it might be of value to some one else in determining allowables. Please note the present allowances at Cedar Springs Place. We think these are set at a minimum and should not be lowered.

Month (Allowance:	2-room 45 KWH	3-room 50 KWH	4-room 55 KWH	5-room 65 KWH)
March	40	59.5	67	66.5
April	41	55	59	72.5
May	42.5	48.5	60	75.5
June	43	47.5	49.5	78
July	44	59	56	83
August	57.5	65.5	89	95.5
September	47	57.5	72.5	85
October	39	55	58	72
November	43	46.5	61	94.5
December	48	57.5	70.5	83

**THE MASTHEAD — THE PICTURES**

All the pictures in this issue of the BULLETIN, including the one in the Masthead, were taken at Laurel Homes (PWA-built, USHA-leased, 1300-unit, Cincinnati slum clearance project) and show project children enjoying activities sponsored by the WPA nursery school. Their health and happiness are obvious.

HINTS TO THE HOUSING MANAGER

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

► Tenant newspapers are the most popular form of community undertaking in public housing projects, according to a report submitted to the BULLETIN by Abraham Goldfeld, a member of the Division's Executive Council. Mr. Goldfeld's figures show that there are 21 tenant papers being published throughout the country and that next in order of popularity are arts and crafts groups, bridge and card clubs, and dancing-- 17 project reporting these activities. The third form of expression practiced most frequently in public housing projects is-- Ping Pong, 16 being the count on this item. Then come sewing clubs (15), women's clubs (14), dramatic clubs (13), boy scout troops and tenant associations (12), camera clubs (11), men's clubs (10), credit unions (9) -- followed by a long list of miscellaneous activities, with a scattering of followers for each.

PLAY AREA SURFACING

► The Division's field service has reported as one of the best play space surfaces yet seen an asphalt base mixed with a certain amount of cork, which gives a resilient, nonabrasive product that is not too hard on children's knees. This surfacing is being used in Boston between groups of houses for small play spaces about 30' square. The product is made locally.

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

► The Housing Authority of the City of Seattle reports that the resources of the graduate school of the University of Washington are being utilized to secure needed research work on various phases of local housing problems. At the present time a study is in progress reviewing

the rent policies of local welfare agencies in order that the Authority and the city welfare agencies can adopt a more consistent attitude toward the housing of welfare clients. A second study is being made of homogeneous natural areas in the city, stressing the social characteristics which exist in relation to housing conditions. A third and very extensive study is being undertaken on the amount and kind of use made of various rooms and equipment. In charge is a specialist in the sociology of housing who has made comprehensive studies for Scandinavian governments. In addition to this study, he assists the Authority's architects to meet more functionally the needs of the low-income families to be housed.

GIVE AND TAKE

► Upon the recent opening for tenancy of several units in one of the four Hartford (Connecticut) USHA-aided projects, thirteen homemaking students from a local college received the 9,000 visitors which the project's display unit drew, acting as both give and take agents--giving answers to visitors on the plan and purpose of the development (as well as advice on homemaking matters)-- and taking note of the visitors' reactions so that they could be reported to the Hartford Authority as an indication of what the consensus was on the faults and virtues of the project.

TENANT RELOCATION

► The 66-page tenant relocation report of the St. Louis Housing Authority reads like a story. They approached the problem with the questions: What kind of people were the site tenants? What were the

dwellings like that they lived in? They found the people to have been 65 per cent from neighboring rural mountain areas with challenging social problems and they traced the history of their former dwellings from grandeur to squalor.

The report includes pictorial charts showing the marital status, occupations, ages, and "neighborliness" of the displaced tenants and many statistical charts on other phases of the problem.

WHENCE?

► The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles has just made a check to find out from what type of houses its tenants are coming and here is the answer: auto courts, tents, dilapidated houses in changing neighborhoods, overcrowded houses, houses without foundations, houses without sanitary facilities.

TENANT PAPER EDITORIAL

► The following is quoted from the Bedford Dweller (Pittsburgh tenant project paper) as part of a commentary on Dr. F. Stuart Chapin's recent article on the social effects of good housing:

"If Mr. Chapin were to measure the effects of good housing upon the residents of Bedford Dwellings, he would certainly find that, already on the whole there is an increase in 'morale,' 'general adjustment,' social status,' and 'social participation.' He would find large numbers of people, for the first time, actively engaged in functions which were difficult to participate in before moving to the Dwellings . . . Although some of the functions may only be card clubs, or checker clubs, or the like, they are representative of the new social acuteness of the tenants. . . ."